



# SCARSDALE OFFICIAL Village Newsletter

As America comes to grips with the full scale of slavery in its history, we are learning that Scarsdale is implicated too. As part of this reckoning, the Junior League of Central Westchester (JLCW), Dennis Culliton of Witness Stones Project, genealogist and historian Teresa Vega and faculty and students from Scarsdale High School pooled their resources and their passion for social justice to begin uncovering one of the untold stories of Wayside Cottage in Scarsdale. They discovered that Cottage owner Thomas Hadden enslaved Rose Heady and the seven children she had by Hadden. He freed them upon his death in 1761—they were the first known freed Black family of Westchester County—and left them resources to become a foundational family in the County, and beyond. Many generations later, their descendants, including Vega, have carried on their legacy. A ceremony was held on Friday, June 7, as part of dedicating eight Witness Stones at the Cottage in memory of Rose and her children, Elenor, Jacob, Dennes, Amos, Robert, Frances and Lazarus, and to honor the pivotal role they played.

JLCW president Danielle Marino called it a “most important and very special day” at a place



near and dear to both the Village of Scarsdale. She noted that Emily Butler donated the property to the Village in 1917, and the Junior League took over custodianship in 1953, running educational tours for decades. Three years ago, a new investigation brought Thomas Hadden and his family's ownership to light, along with the adjacent reality of Rose Heady and her/their family. By partnering first with Witness Stones and then with Scarsdale's school district, a new educational journey began. “The goal,” said Marino, “was to educate first our membership, then our schools and then in turn

our community at large about all the inhabitants that have lived at Wayside Cottage over the years and the impact that they have had on the community as a whole.”

Ali Park, President-Elect of JLCW agreed. “We embarked on this project with Witness Stones because we wanted to better tell the story of this beautiful building,” she said. “We have been telling stories behind this building for 70 years now, but we knew that we weren’t telling the whole story. We needed more information.”

Park said that an April 2023 article in The Scarsdale Inquirer by Todd Sliss, caught the attention of Scarsdale High School teachers Beth Colleary and Kathleen McGreal, who then ignited the curiosity of dozens of students in their classes. Two in particular, Layden Kennedy and Noah Auerbach, embarked on their own mission through an independent study to research and report their findings on the Hadden-Heady family.



“Involving kids in historical research is so important because when you do historical research you have to be really comfortable with the idea of, ‘I don’t know,’” Park said. “Through them and the work that we’ve done, despite not having a lot of recorded information on Rose and her children, I feel like I know Rose and her kids personally and I know that





a lot of other people here today feel the same.”

Layden Kennedy then talked about some of the rich history of Wayside Cottage, the home of the first woman’s club and library, from the time of the American Revolution to the Suffragettes. But, she said, it was the Heady family who lived in Scarsdale both as slaves and free people just over 200 years ago that stood out.

“As we rest these stones here today it’s incredibly important to us that it not only represents a change in Scarsdale history, but from now on the people of Scarsdale, and especially its students, will have a better understanding of the true history of our country and the true history of the land we work and live on,” Kennedy said.

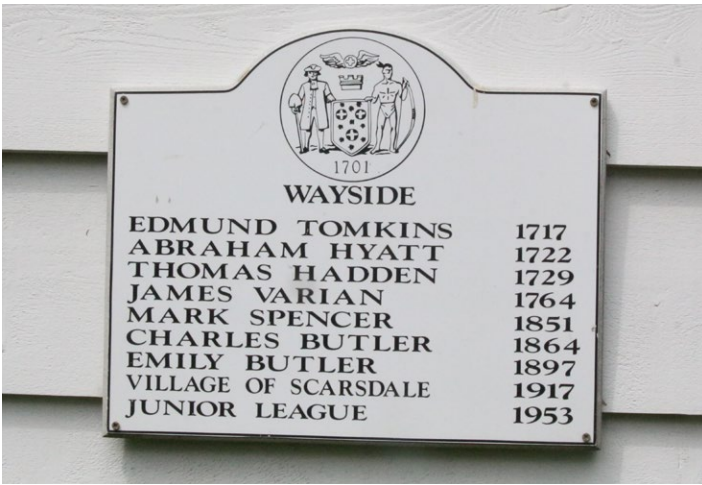
During the high school’s Non Sibi day last month, Kennedy and Auerbach gave their fellow students a tour of the building and shared their research. “Wayside Cottage is not just a building, it is a treasure trove of our community’s history, a place where stories of the past come alive,” Auerbach said. The students plan to hold an exhibition at Wayside Cottage in September to help others understand the “deeper connection to the place we all call home” and create a “bridge between the past and the present.”

Dennis Culliton, a former teacher, founded Witness Stones in 2017, modeling it after the more than 100,000 stolpersteine or “stumbling stones”

in Germany, and throughout Central Europe, that have been telling “one story at a time” about the Jews killed in the Holocaust. For Culliton, attaching individual names and personal information to enslaved people is a way to teach about slavery in a way that resonates deeply.

Hearing there were 2,700 enslaved people in Connecticut in 1790 just doesn’t strike people the same way, he says, or even seem like it was possible. But it was. “We don’t want to tear any signs down, we don’t want to tear down any statues, we want to put another layer on the story, and in many ways make it more colorful,” Culliton said. “Rose, through her abilities, inherited property, and with our ability to find the property she inherited through the good work of Teresa and Ali we were able to look at her and her family and see a story that kind of opened up before us.”

Last week, the 200th witness stone was placed in Connecticut. New York is just getting started with about a dozen this year, including eight so far in Scarsdale. Culliton will be spending Juneteenth in New Paltz on the historic Huguenot Street. Over the past seven years, Witness Stones has reached more than 15,000 students. With the support of educators, Culliton has been able to “help build that empathy and help build the understanding of who lived here and who helped build the communities,” which he said, “changes our vision when



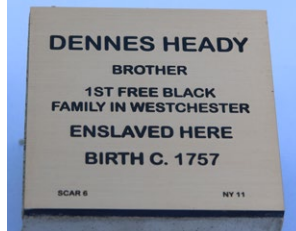
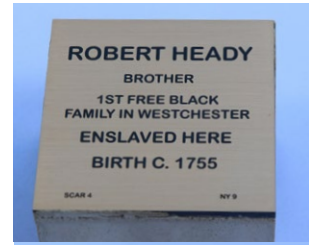
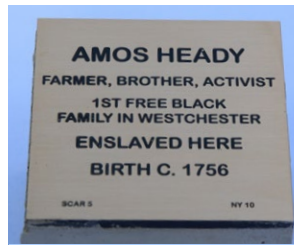
you see slaves were involved in the landscape.”

Vega was accompanied by two other relatives who are descendants of Rose Heady and her children, whom Vega said have a “unique and significant place in the history of this area.” While there are many questions about the relationship between Heady and Hadden that Vega continues to ask, tracing her lineage since 2008 has opened her eyes to a world she never knew. The witness stones, Vega said, will be “tangible reminders of their lives lived here.” The original witness stones, she said, were unmarked tombstones.

“Today as we stand here at Wayside Cottage, we honor the first family of Westchester for beckoning us to reclaim our ancestral narratives,” Vega said. “Their voices echo through the annals of history, guiding us with a newfound mandate to write our ancestors and their communities back into the historic

record, ensuring they are erased no more. When we look at the legacy left by our extended family we just see how foundational they were in every way. It is with gratitude and reverence we extend our heartfelt thanks to Rose, Elenor, Frances, Robert, Lazarus, Dennes, Amos and Jacob. Their legacy propels us forward on the battlefield of remembrance armed with a conviction to honor their sacrifices and preserve their rightful place in history.”

The stones are being placed in the garden on the left when you come onto the Wayside Cottage property from the parking spaces out front, with the stones on both sides of the path leading to a yellow rose bush and a bench under a shade tree. The roses signify not only Rose Heady, but the State flower of New York and the flower of the Junior League, in a perfect setting for reflection on the past, present and future.





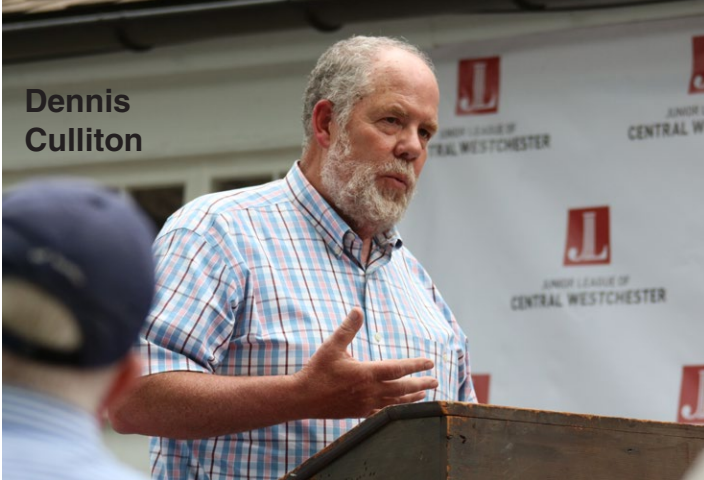
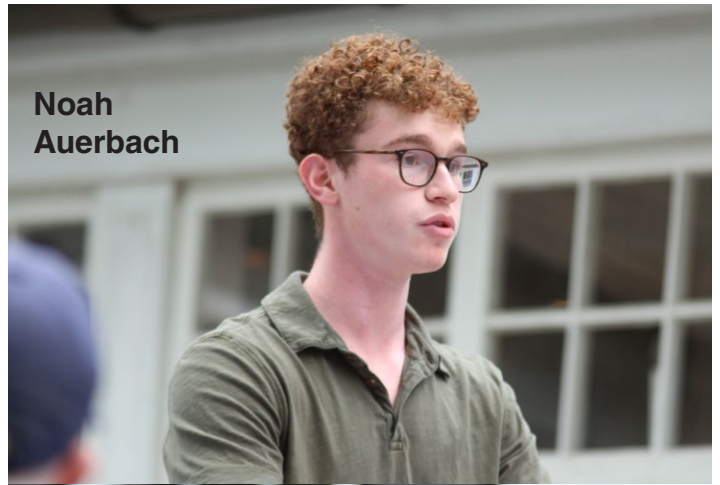
**Danielle Marino**

**Ali Park**

**Kathleen McGreal**



Noah Auerbach



Dennis Culliton



Teresa Vega

